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19 February 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

SUBJECT: Requirements for Low-Level Reconnaissance of Cuba

1. The minute of the meeting of the Special Group on 15 February 1963 requested a comprehensive study of low-level reconnaissance of Cuba. The minute stated that "such a study would include consideration of the strategic significance of proposed targets." COMOR construes the term "strategic significance" as confined to those targets relevant to an offensive threat against the U.S. COMOR has reviewed its previous recommendations for low-level photography and sets forth below its present thinking pursuant to the above injunction.

2. Of major concern to the United States Government is the introduction into Cuba of offensive weapons (MRBMs or IRBMs and bombers) or the release from concealment of any such equipment which may not have been removed from Cuba and which might be deployed from already prepared basic installations. There is no hard information (since the removal of surface-to-surface missiles) that either MRBM-IRBM, or bomber, or nuclear energy associated equipment has been introduced into Cuba or is present there. COMOR ^{can} cannot

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however

~~accordingly, provide targets which are justifiable as candidates for~~
therefore solely on the basis of evident military activity which might be
~~low-level photography [because of their offensive threat.]~~
associated with offensive suspect weapons
systems

5. Surface-to-air missiles are not an offensive threat

although the nature of their deployment may indicate they are intended for the protection of offensive installations. Originally this was the case for some of the SAMs in Cuba but such redeployment as has been accomplished since the departure of the MRBM-IRBM~~B~~ now suggests strategic defense of the territory of Cuba. We do not believe that,

at the moment we do not know what sites or low-level
of SAM sites is justifiable.] *tgts although this may change,*
within the concept of strategic significance. low-level reconnaissance

6. Cruise-missile sites have been followed as closely as possible in high-level reconnaissance. Such surveillance of cruise missile activity as has been made by high-level reconnaissance reveals no ominous force level changes. As for the crates which have been associated with cruise missiles, a comprehensive and simultaneous

low-level coverage of all crate sites, periodically repeated, would be needed to be more conclusive on this question. It is our opinion that the cruise-missile activity, [while of significance] as defense against

invasion, is not significant in terms of an offensive threat against
the continental United States. This may change in which case tgs in this cat will
be recommended. Tentatively

7. If cruise-missile sites are deployed so as to pose a threat to Guantanamo, the Board may wish to include this within the

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concept of an offensive threat against the United States. In that case cruise-missile sites in the vicinity of Guantanamo might be justified for low-level reconnaissance. *In addition to surveillance of any offensive threat,*

4. The number of Soviet personnel and the amount of ground forces equipment presently located in Cuba is a cause of

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sources. Low-level photography if carried out comprehensively and simultaneously ^{will} give us a better feel for the extent of Soviet and equipment ^{including indications of the removal of personnel & equipment for turnover of equipment to the Cubans} personnel deployment. ~~However~~, we do not consider this category of activity to constitute a direct offensive threat against the United States.

Accordingly, we do not find a requirement for low-level coverage justifiable.

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3. *The* There remain then two categories of targets which might give us information concerning the presence or introduction of offensive weapons in Cuba. *These* are, ships suspect of carrying military equipment [and personnel], and a number of unidentified installations, which include underground or unusual facilities.

4. *for* Ships: We consider the monitoring of [military equipment] and personnel entering Cuba to be of great

[REDACTED]

these cargos adequately. COMOR considers that while these ships are in port they should be covered during the daytime by low-level photography to supplement high-level coverage.

In addition and based on recent experience, COMOR is convinced that suspicious military equipment will be unloaded at night and, therefore, believes that nighttime photography will likewise be required.

5. Unidentified Installations: A number of unidentified installations, the majority of which include underground facilities, have been isolated by high-level coverage. These installations (listed at Tab A) are strongly suspect as being established for weapons storage of some sort.

long hatched areas
suspect carrying offensive weapons

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With high-level coverage and with some low-level coverage in the past we have not been able to explain the enigma which these facilities presents. However, we do know that in many cases an appraisal of the photography over a period of time shows the growth and expansion of such facilities. We consider their existence and continued development as sinister. We also believe that low-level photography can contribute to explaining the uses for which these facilities are intended. We again recognize that in due course, depending upon the nature of

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8. Recommendation:

a. That high-altitude photography of ships in port identified as suspect be supplemented by low-altitude daytime photography and photography at night.

b. That low-level photography be acquired on the unidentified installations listed in Tab A in the order of priority as indicated as soon as practicable.

c. Low level photo

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